



Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

5049th meeting

 Monday, 4 October 2004, 4 p.m.
 New York

<i>President:</i>	Sir Emyr Jones Parry	(United Kingdom)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Lacanilao
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Spain	Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo
	United States of America	Mr. Danforth

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

 Letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to
 the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council
 (S/2004/779)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2004/779)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Cuba, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Gillerman (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I received a letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2004/780, and in which he requests to be invited to participate in today's meeting.

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the Council's provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations, in which he requests that we authorize His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Ambassador, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations to address the Council.

That letter will be published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2004/781.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Mahmassani to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, requesting that Mr. Ravan Farhadi, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, be invited to participate in the debate.

In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Ravan Farhadi to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in response to the request contained in a letter dated 4 October 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, which will be issued as document S/2004/779.

I should like to draw attention to documents S/2004/776, S/2004/761 and S/2004/729, containing letters dated 30, 27 and 14 September 2004, respectively, from the Permanent Observer of Palestine; and S/2004/757 containing a letter dated 24 September from Israel.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (spoke in Arabic): We congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for this month and we pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Spain.

Israel, the occupying Power, persists in committing war crimes and acts of State terrorism against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. In the last six days alone, Israeli occupation forces have killed 83 Palestinians, including 20 children under the age of 18, and have injured over 350 others. Israel has caused widespread destruction, including the demolition of homes and the destruction of farmland, economic installations and infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity networks. The bulk of these losses occurred when the Israeli occupation forces swept through the northern part of the Gaza Strip, including the Jabaliya refugee camp, rushing more than 2,000 soldiers, more than 100 tanks and 100 armoured vehicles and bulldozers to the area, in addition to its massive use of helicopter gunships. The Israeli occupation forces have used this massive military might indiscriminately, even using cluster bombs against human Palestinian targets.

These forces have deliberately destroyed just about everything in their way, including day nurseries and schools. Hundreds of Palestinians are now without shelter as a result of the total or partial demolition of their homes. Tens of thousands are without water or electricity and are suffering from severe shortages of food and medicine. This has precipitated a genuine humanitarian tragedy, the repercussions of which will require vast resources and much time to redress. In addition to that, many ranking Israeli officials have expressed their intention to pursue their aggression for an extended period of time as well as their intention to set up a buffer zone.

My delegation has informed the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly of all these horrific developments in three letters (S/2004/729, S/2004/761 and S/2004/776), in the last of which we requested immediate intervention by the Security Council and stressed the need to take proper measures in this regard. The Arab Group has also done this. We appreciate your prompt response, Mr. President, in convening this open meeting, and we hope that the Security Council will be able to consider the draft resolution that has been submitted to it and to vote on it as soon as possible.

Israel, the occupying Power, claims that it has swept through the northern part of the Gaza Strip and committed all those acts in response to the launching of rockets from that area on an Israeli town that is close to the border between Israel and the Palestinian territory, specifically, the launching of a rocket last Wednesday that resulted in the killing of two Israeli children. Here, we express our sorrow at the loss of the two children, and at the loss of any civilian life on both sides. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority has repeatedly demanded that Palestinian groups engaged in this practice stop it completely and give precedence to the Palestinian national interest over any other consideration.

This has nothing to do with the legitimate right of our people to resist the occupation. At the same time, it is important that the context be very clear. We are talking here about a rudimentary weapon that is put together locally and that has caused, over the past several years, the loss of three Israeli civilian lives, including those of the two children. We are not talking about weapons of deterrence or about rockets in the traditional sense of the word. That is the reality on the ground, despite the fact that we have reiterated our position that this practice must cease altogether. There is absolutely no justification, under any circumstances, for this Israeli hysteria, this widespread killing and this deliberate destruction. There is no justification for the war crimes, State terrorism and violations of international humanitarian law which preceded recent events such as the continuation of extrajudicial killings; the killing and injuring of civilians, including women and children; the continued use of indiscriminate excessive force; the ongoing demolition of homes, economic installations and farmland; the policy of closures that prevents the movement of people and goods. Israel continues the colonization of our territory and the construction of its separation wall, which will destroy the present and the future of our people, as well as any prospects for peace between the two sides and the possibility of establishing two States.

Once again, my Mission has kept the Council informed, in a series of 203 letters that document all those crimes and violations. This raises the following serious question: Why has the Council failed so far to put an end to all this? Even before, why did the Council fail to halt the colonization of the Palestinian territory and the attempts to change the legal status of Jerusalem? Irrespective of the reason, which is known

to all of us, perhaps the time has come for the Council to take a firm position to put an end to this constantly unfolding tragedy. What we need now is for the Council to take a step by calling on Israel to cease its aggression and promptly halt its military operations, withdraw from the northern Gaza Strip and not repeat such actions in the future.

Perhaps what is taking place now in Gaza is related in some way to the so-called unilateral Sharon disengagement plan, which is aimed at dismantling the settlements and military installations in the Gaza Strip, as well as four settlement outposts in the northern West Bank, while laying siege to the Gaza Strip and maintaining control over its land, airspace and water. The plan also aims at continuing the construction of the separation wall and the building of settlements in the West Bank. In brief, it aims at a long-term movement to surround the Gaza Strip while maintaining the colonization of the West Bank. We cannot accept that.

That Sharon plan and the Israeli-American exchange of letters of 14 April 2004 are in violation of international law and completely contravene the road map. Suffice it to mention here that the plan is unilateral and aims at undermining the territorial integrity of the Palestinian territory. Any withdrawal from Gaza must indeed be a genuine part of the road map. This means that it must be parallel to similar steps taken in the West Bank, primarily halting the construction of the separation wall and stopping the building of settlements. And all of that must take place in coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

Naturally, the withdrawal must be complete, so that the Gaza Strip will not be transformed into a huge prison. We call upon the international community to adhere strictly to the road map and to support the Palestinian position in that regard. Our understanding of the position of the Quartet, despite some ambiguity, is that the Quartet has taken the same approach; that approach is acceptable, and we hope it will develop in the right direction. While we reiterate our acceptance of the road map and our support for the Quartet action, we call on the Quartet to impose respect for the road map and not to depart from it. We also call on the Security Council to become engaged in the political process, thus giving it momentum and further force.

The International Court of Justice has issued an advisory opinion regarding the wall built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory,

including East Jerusalem and the surrounding area. The Court has set forth the legal obligations incumbent upon Israel, the occupying Power, under the norms of international law and the other legal obligations of all Member States, and has requested the United Nations, especially the General Assembly and Security Council, to take additional measures to bring an end to the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall.

The General Assembly has responded favourably and has taken the first step, which is set out in its resolution ES-10/15. The Security Council has not yet responded, and we intend to put this extremely important question before the Council. This will have immense implications for the question of Palestine and the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict — and indeed, for the whole body of international law and the entire international order. It is our fervent hope that the Council will respond in the right way.

Our steadfast Palestinian people will not surrender. It will continue to cling to its national rights. While we feel a profound sense of bitterness at the lack of justice and legality, and at the application of double standards, we have not lost hope. Once again we express our hope that the Council will today be able to take the necessary measures, specifically regarding the current situation in northern Gaza Strip.

The President: I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for the kind words he addressed to me.

I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): At the outset, I would like to convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. You have already done so very ably in the past and I am sure you will do so this month as well, although I wish I were congratulating you under different circumstances.

Sadly, the Security Council has once again been galvanized into action not because of the murder of children, but because of the defence against those murders. Once again, consequently, there is an attempt to put the victims of terror in the dock, rather than the murderers themselves. That recurring phenomenon is disturbing and alarming.

On 29 September 2004, the eve of the Succoth holiday — or the Feast of Tabernacles — which we are

still celebrating as we sit here today, two Israeli children, Dorit Aniso, age two, and Yuval Abedeh, age four, were murdered by Qassam rockets fired at their home in the southern Israeli town of Sderot. The Palestinian terror organization Hamas proudly claimed responsibility for that attack.

The murder of those two young children is only the latest in a continuing onslaught of such terrorist incidents, in which the innocent civilians of Sderot and neighbouring communities have been targeted without respite. Those rocket attacks, like other acts of Palestinian terror, are employed with the specific intent of killing and injuring as many civilians as possible.

In similar incidents on 28 June, four rockets in Sderot killed two Israeli civilians — Afik Zahavi, aged four, and Mordechai Yosopov, aged 49 — landing near a nursery school and damaging a nearby coffee shop. Indeed, as part of a broader Palestinian terrorist campaign that has brought untold suffering, more than 460 of these Qassam rockets have been indiscriminately fired at Israel's civilian population, causing numerous deaths, many injuries and extensive destruction of property. Qassam rocket-fire from Gaza continues, even as we speak, to be deliberately directed against the civilian community, targeting and terrorizing innocent civilians as they lie in their beds, sit in their living rooms or take their children to school.

Terrorist groups, operating with complete freedom and immunity from Palestinian Authority territory, have every intention of escalating and intensifying this campaign with ever-more sophisticated weapons. Palestinian terror organizations have been producing Qassam rockets in metal workshops dispersed throughout the Gaza Strip. Hamas has developed these new rockets using knowledge gathered over the years by international terror groups. The ease with which these rockets are hidden, transported and launched and the ability to mass-produce them have made them a weapon of choice. Hamas is currently seeking to develop the Qassam 4 rocket to enhance the range of the missile and increase the impact of its explosion. As a recent statement issued by Hamas operatives declared,

"We are sending a clear message to the Zionists that Qassam rockets will continue and will reach their targets, God willing. And tell those occupying Ashkelon that their turn is coming soon."

This is an insufferable situation that no country, including those whose representatives sit around this table, could or would tolerate.

Despite the fact that the Palestinian Authority has thousands of police and security personnel in the northern Gaza Strip, they are doing nothing, and have done nothing for years, to halt the firing of Qassam rockets on Israeli communities. The fact remains that the Palestinian leadership still refuses to fulfil any of its obligations to confront and dismantle the Palestinian terrorist network, in an ongoing and egregious violation of basic international norms, signed commitments and the explicit terms of the road map's very first clauses. Instead, the Palestinian leadership continues to offer encouragement and support for those actions, glorifying murder as martyrdom and pursuing a campaign of incitement to hatred and violence. The Palestinian leadership continues to choose an alliance of violence with the terrorists over a partnership for peace with Israel, based on mutual obligations and mutual compromise, and the Israeli and Palestinian peoples pay the price of that cruel choice every single day.

Try as some might to confuse consequence and cause, most Palestinian representatives and most Palestinian people know that, if not for the terrorism, there would be no Israeli defensive action and there would have been a two-State solution long ago. It is that terrorism and the Palestinian leadership's complicity in it that are the greatest single obstacle to peace and the enemy of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. It is that terrorism, motivated by opposition not to Israel's conduct but to its existence, that fuels hatred and disempowers those yearning for peace.

As Council members are aware, Israel intends to disengage from the Gaza Strip as part of Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement initiative, which has been welcomed by the Quartet, most recently in its 22 September statement, and by the international community as a whole as an important opportunity to restart the road map process. The disengagement plan promises greater stability and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike and a platform from which mutual implementation of the road map can proceed.

Against that background, the firing of Qassam rockets and the continuation of Palestinian terrorism constitute an attempt both to thwart the disengagement

plan and to perpetrate terrorism and violence as a strategic tool. They represent yet another case in which the Palestinian leadership chooses terror and the suffering of its own people over exhausting the avenues for peace. This Council should not allow that strategy to be rewarded by addressing the response to terrorism instead of terrorism itself. It must be rejected, not appeased.

These continued rocket attacks from Gaza constitute a grave violation of international humanitarian law not only because they target innocent Israeli civilians; Palestinian residents' lives are also put at risk and held hostage to the continued and despicable tactic adopted by Palestinian terrorists, by which innocent Palestinians are used as human shields and civilian areas are used as staging grounds for terrorist atrocities. Virtually all terrorist fire directed from Gaza against Israeli targets emanates from crowds or residential buildings, and hundreds of explosive charges and mines are planted within the civilian infrastructure. In one recent grave incident on 22 July 2004, a 15-year old Palestinian boy, Hassan Jamil Al-Zanin, was killed in cold blood by Fatah/Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade terrorists when he tried to stop them from launching a Qassam rocket attack near his family home. In yet another example of fabrication and misrepresentation by Palestinian spokesmen, the death of Hassan Al-Zanin was presented in a letter to the Secretary-General as though he were killed by Israeli forces.

These kinds of blatantly false allegations should come now as no surprise. We have heard many of them again today. They are part of the long pattern of Palestinian representations that refer to murderers as martyrs, armed terrorists as though they were innocent civilians, and the innocent victims of Palestinian terrorism of both sides as though they were non-existent. It is part of a mantra constantly repeated before this Council that is no more true for its repetition, that ignores both Palestinian responsibilities and Israeli rights, and that fails to recognize the excruciating difficulties faced by Israeli forces in trying to protect their citizens and minimize harm to Palestinian lives when the terrorists they confront show as little concern for Palestinian lives as they do for Israeli ones. And yet, while this disingenuous and disrespectful presentation comes as no surprise, it should remind Council members of the importance of distinguishing just claims from merely noisy ones.

In the face of this complex and gruesome reality, Israel is compelled to act in accordance with its recognized right and duty of self-defence in an effort to halt the firing of these rockets and the murder of its citizens. The Israeli Defence Forces are taking action against those responsible for launching Qassam missiles from amongst the Gaza civilian population. While the present operation is broader than its predecessors, it is relatively limited, with the aim of refraining from deeply penetrating densely populated areas. In that context, and faced with a brutal Palestinian strategy that seeks to maximize civilian casualties on both sides, Israeli forces are making every effort to avoid harming non-combatants and their property, in accordance with their legal obligation. But there should be no doubt that the primary responsibility for tragic civilian casualties lies with those terrorists who have so heartlessly abused the protected status of Palestinian civilians and put them deliberately in harm's way, in direct violation of the most basic humanitarian norms.

There has also been disturbing information that, once again in recent days, Palestinian terrorists are attempting to cynically exploit not only civilian areas but also United Nations vehicles, ambulances, facilities and personnel. This would hardly be the first time that Palestinian terrorists have abused the immunity of United Nations facilities and ambulances in order to launch attacks, move weapons or transfer operatives, thereby endangering United Nations personnel and operations. That worrying pattern of activity is a matter of grave concern that threatens to seriously undermine the integrity of United Nations operations. It requires utmost vigilance from all sides, including United Nations officials on the ground, to do everything in their power to prevent such misuse and to investigate any alleged misconduct.

In that regard, today's reported admission to a Canadian television station by Mr. Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), that members of the Hamas terrorist organization are "on the UNRWA payroll", and are thus being funded by United Nations Member States, is especially disturbing and alarming. As Council members are aware, the Hamas organization is officially recognized by numerous States as a terrorist organization without any artificial distinctions between its various wings. Its countless brutal acts of terrorism

against innocent civilians, for which it has itself proudly taken credit, have been condemned repeatedly by United Nations Member States and by the Secretary-General, as well as in the Council itself. It should be recalled that, by the admission of Hamas's own leaders, members of the political wing are involved in planning, directing and providing the support, infrastructure and financing for the acts of terror for which that organization is responsible. In recent statements, for example, Hamas's so-called political wing has declared that the political apparatus is sovereign over the military apparatus and that the political leadership has "freed the hand of the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades to do whatever they want against the brothers of monkeys and pigs".

It is precisely that support infrastructure that the road map requires be dismantled, as the Quartet, of which the United Nations is a member, reiterated just on 22 September, when it called for the dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. The very idea that individuals with clear links to the Hamas terrorist network may be on the UNRWA payroll is totally unacceptable and should be properly investigated.

Let me be very clear: Israel reaffirms its support for the humanitarian work being carried out by UNRWA and other international organizations on the ground in very difficult conditions. Israel continues to facilitate, to the best of its ability, the carrying out of the mandate of those organizations, despite the obstacles faced as a result of the continuing terrorism and violence carried out by the Palestinian side. In the lead-up to this operation, preparations were made in order to respond effectively to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian civilian populations, including the opportunity of providing liaison officers and the opening of a special route to provide easy access to the vehicles of international humanitarian organizations. Palestinian liaison officials, representatives of the local Palestinian council and representatives of international organizations were notified as to the opening of that special humanitarian route.

In addition, representatives of district coordination offices are stationed at various points along the route in order to provide all necessary humanitarian assistance. Thus far, over 35 trips along the route have been coordinated, including convoys of medical supplies, maintenance crews, vehicles belonging to international organizations and local

ambulances. At the same time, it is vitally important that humanitarian activities and cooperation not be compromised and abused by the illegal actions of Palestinian terrorist groups.

The costs of the Palestinian leadership's morally bankrupt strategy of terrorism are paid in the lives of innocents, the stagnation in the peace process and the suffering of both Israelis and Palestinians. By entertaining initiatives that effectively reward that strategy, the Council would only embolden extremists and undermine the letter and spirit of the road map. As Foreign Minister Shalom stated in the General Assembly debate just a few days ago,

"The Palestinians are not exempt from the imperatives of the global war on terror. On the contrary, it is in their clear interest to join it. To stand up against Hamas and Islamic Jihad is to stand up for Palestinian rights, not against them."
(A/59/PV.7)

Sadly, the current Palestinian leadership has shown that it is as incapable of being a partner in peace as it is of offering its people reform and democratic rule. They have preferred rhetoric at the United Nations to responsibility at home. But that is not a path the Council should condone by entertaining additional one-sided draft resolutions. We would urge the Council to stand by the side of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, and remind the Palestinian side, as the Quartet recently did, that the path to peace and security lies in the end of terrorism and in reform. It lies in taking responsibility and not in shifting blame. It lies in Ramallah and Gaza, not in New York.

All this week, Israeli families will celebrate the holiday of Succoth, the feast of tabernacles. On this occasion, let me take this opportunity to end by saying, may God spread his tabernacle of peace over all of us and over the people of Israel.

The President: I thank the representative of Israel for his kind words addressed to me.

The order of speaking among members of the Council has previously been determined by a ballot. In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I would now request that all speakers, members of the Council and non-members alike, try to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. It would be much appreciated if

delegations that have lengthy statements prepared were to circulate their statements in writing, and perhaps to deliver a condensed version in the Chamber.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (spoke in French): At a time when the General Assembly has barely concluded its general debate — during which a wide consensus was generated around the need for action in the Middle East before the region finally plunges into violence, and on the margins of which the Quartet attempted to breathe life into a peace process that is today moribund — Israel has once again launched its troops, tanks and helicopters into Palestinian camps in Gaza to wreak death and destruction.

The toll of the previous five days of unbridled recourse to brutal force is outrageous. Israeli missiles and rockets have mowed down dozens of Palestinians, among them numerous children. Hundreds of civilians have been injured, and numerous houses and much infrastructure have been destroyed. Horror and desolation prevail in the Jabaliya, Khan Younnis and Beit Hanoun camps.

Instead of acknowledging the increasing appeals for restraint, including one by the Secretary-General, Israel has decided to pursue its military offensive, with the arrogance and indifference that only the certainty of immunity can nourish, promising more death and destruction. Bearing down relentlessly on an exhausted civilian population that has suffered physical abuse, violence and deprivation. Israel has used the most deadly and sophisticated weapons to carry out its terrorist enterprise. The Israeli Prime Minister publicly boasted about what he considered an early success and, deaf to reason, announced on Sunday an escalation of the military operation, perhaps lasting several weeks.

This disproportionate use of force against the Palestinian people is obviously not in response to a few rockets fired into Israel, which killed two children — and we are deeply sorry for this, because we are touched by the death of any child. This use of brutal force is clearly part of a strategy designed to terrorize the Palestinian people, to annihilate their will to resist and their sense of national pride and to leave them battered and broken after Israel's announced withdrawal from the Gaza Strip — if it ever takes place.

These vile methods used by Israel against defenceless civilian populations constitute war crimes and acts of State terrorism that must be energetically

condemned and denounced by the international community as a whole. What difference is there between a bomb explosion that kills passengers in a bus and a rocket or a missile deliberately fired by a tank on a home, killing women and children? Frankly, I see no difference.

Confronted with the grave downward slide of the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the civilian population is suffering from the worst kinds of acts, the international community cannot and must not remain passive or indifferent. Just a month ago, this very Security Council acted in an unusually rapid and effective manner even though there was no direct threat to international peace and security. Today, if its credibility is to be maintained, it must demand that Israel immediately put an end to the operations being carried out in Gaza, withdraw its troops, respect the Council's resolutions and the standards of international humanitarian law, end its policy of arbitrary executions, stop destroying homes and respect its commitments under the road map, the validity and relevance of which has just been reaffirmed by the Quartet.

Algeria energetically condemns the abominable crimes committed today against the people living in the Gaza Strip, and we reiterate our full solidarity with the Palestinian people, who are exposed to a genuine war of extermination. We call for a just, definitive and comprehensive solution based on international legality and Israeli withdrawal from the territories that it is occupying by force, allowing the Palestinian people to establish their independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

My country calls on all Security Council members to support the draft resolution that I have just introduced on behalf of the Arab Group. It is a balanced draft, inspired by the urgency and gravity of the situation, and is couched in language that is largely agreed by the Security Council. It calls essentially for an end to military operations in the Gaza Strip and to the cycle of violence and counter-violence. Thus, it would open the door to wisdom so that the parties can honour their obligations with respect to the road map.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (spoke in Spanish): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to tell you how satisfied I am to see you guiding our work with your well-known effectiveness and skill. I would also like to

thank you for your kind words about last month's Spanish presidency.

We would like to voice our approval for the fact that we are meeting today at the request of Tunisia, on behalf of the League of Arab States, to study a situation that is extremely serious and that has to be handled with the utmost seriousness by this body, which is responsible for international peace and security. In a communiqué issued on 1 October, the Spanish Government has already expressed its deep concern about events that have been taking place in the past few days in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. Those events have further worsened what was already a critical situation in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There have been far too many deaths, and there are going to be still more in this region. We regret all these deaths, caused by one party and by the other, but we must recognize the fact that the greatest number of victims — dead and injured — have fallen on the Palestinian side. The high number of Palestinians killed and wounded, including many civilians, among them children, show that Israel's armed response has been and continues to be disproportionate. We cannot believe that all of them, nor even a majority of them, are terrorists. Therefore, the Security Council must urge Israel to cease and desist from punitive actions, in particular armed action not in conformity with international law.

Clearly, we recognize Israel's right to protect itself and to protect its citizens when confronted with acts of terrorism, but we must bear in mind the fact that any State's right to self-defence must be exercised within respect for international norms, in particular the norms of humanitarian law. We understand Israel's security concerns, but we cannot but condemn the methods it is using, with acts of force that have excessive and indiscriminate effects.

We note with concern that Israeli military activities in Gaza, which are causing so much pain and suffering, seem to be taking place in response to a premeditated plan to facilitate the announced evacuation of Gaza, and also to smoothe out the difficulties in the withdrawal and the following days. If this were indeed the case, we would be faced with a policy that we consider to be erroneous, the results of which will not be the ones hoped for. Violence always breeds more violence.

We must also voice our sense of frustration with and our rejection of the acts of violence committed by Palestinian elements who think — on the basis of equally ambiguous and erroneous criteria — that the recourse to force could benefit their interests. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, the violence practised by certain Palestinian sectors contributes to derailing attempts to revive the peace process, and it can only demoralize those who are making efforts to achieve peace and to provide a future to the peoples of the region. It provokes a generalized rejection among the international community.

We are convinced that there is no armed solution to this conflict. Therefore the parties — both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority — must honour their commitments as set out in the road map, as the Security Council has repeatedly called upon them to do. The road map is the only mechanism we have, along with the Quartet, that can help move forward the peace process, which once again appears seriously compromised. We all must work together to put an end to the spiral of violence that has engulfed the region and to open an avenue for peace. The Security Council must also shoulder its responsibilities.

On the basis of those principles and perspectives, we will review the draft resolution submitted by the Algerian delegation on behalf of the Arab Group.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): During this first debate, Sir, let me start by expressing delight at your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of October. We wish most sincerely to commend Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo for his very able and distinguished presidency in September.

Since Romania fully aligns itself with the statement to be made shortly by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, I can afford to be very brief.

Romania is extremely concerned at the recent escalation of acts of violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories. We condemn the repeated terrorist rocket attacks on Israeli civilian targets. The Palestinian Authority must take decisive action against the planners and perpetrators of all such terrorist acts, for which there can be no justification.

At the same time, we are disturbed by reports noting that the Israeli military incursion in northern

Gaza, in response to those attacks, has led to victims among the civilian population, many of them children. As we have stated on numerous occasions, the State of Israel must exercise its inherent right of self-defence in strict compliance with the relevant norms of international law, which prohibit actions amounting to the excessive use of force or collective punishment.

Israel must consider carefully the consequences of its actions in Gaza. Such operations are not likely to bring greater security to Israel. On the contrary, they will only increase tension in the region and generate a new pretext for extremists to resort to violence.

In the present situation, which is extremely difficult, we call on both Israelis and Palestinians to prevent the conflict from escalating and to start implementing their obligations under the road map, in order to revive the prospects for peace.

The first step taken by the Palestinian Authority should be to fight terrorism unequivocally and to work towards the effective dismantling of its infrastructure and capabilities. The Palestinians must end public incitement to violence and do their utmost to stop militants from attacking Israel and thus provoking its response.

Any survey of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would clearly show that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people cannot be fulfilled through violent means. On the other hand, the Israeli Government should step up its efforts to prepare for the execution of its proposed disengagement from Gaza, which must be full, complete and undertaken in a manner consistent with the road map.

Moreover, the Israeli Government must freeze settlement activities, take all possible steps to ease the humanitarian and economic situation of the Palestinian people, and refrain from taking unilateral actions that could prejudice the final outcome of negotiations.

There is no alternative to the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. Let me reiterate that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace can be achieved only through direct negotiations between the parties, as envisaged in the road map and in accordance with the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, may I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. I should like also to congratulate the

representative of Spain, Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo, for the outstanding manner in which he presided over the work of the Council during the very busy month of September.

Once again the Security Council has had to convene a special meeting because of a situation that poses a threat to peace and security in the Middle East and internationally. At issue are the actions taken by the Israeli armed forces against the Palestinian people in the area of the Jabaliya and Beit Hanoun refugee camps in the Gaza Strip.

Let me reiterate first that my delegation recognizes Israel's right to protect its people against terrorist attacks and consequently to take the necessary steps in that regard. However, it must always do so within the framework of international law, particularly international humanitarian law. At the same time, the prolonged military occupation of the Palestinian territories; the various measures taken by the Israeli authorities, which severely limit the population's freedom of movement; and the destruction of their houses and their livelihoods, in addition to the frequent use of excessive force by the occupying military forces, have succeeded only in aggravating the situation, intensifying the deep frustration of the people of the occupied territories and exacerbating the violence there.

The construction of the wall separating the Israeli and Palestinian communities, which was deemed illegal in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, is continuing in the occupied territories. The wall cuts off the productive resources of the Palestinian people, their best arable land and their major water sources. That in turn is contributing to the very harsh conditions facing the Palestinian people: non-existent prospects for development or economic progress, the lack of freedom, the absence of opportunities for a better life, and the prolonged political crisis affecting the Palestinian National Authority constitute the principal factors underlying the situation of Palestinian violence against Israel.

The international community continues to await effective measures leading to the early reorganization and restructuring of the Palestinian security forces, so that they can effectively discharge their commitment to halt the violence — a commitment they undertook under the road map. In this particular case, the Palestinian Authority must take effective measures to

stop the rocket attacks by Palestinians militants against Israel, and, as the Secretary-General has stated, both sides must comply with their obligation to protect the civilian population.

The road map, endorsed last year by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003), is still the only peace plan agreed to by the parties. However, neither of the parties has taken serious steps to implement it.

Against that political backdrop comes the announcement by the Israeli Government of its plan to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip. My delegation welcomed the decision to withdraw from the occupied territories, but we are deeply concerned at the potential consequences of such a unilateral action. Withdrawal by the Israeli forces must be accompanied by adequate measures that ensure stability and security in the area and that the law of the jungle does not prevail there.

At the same time, withdrawal from Gaza must take place within the framework of the resolutions of the Security Council and the road map; it cannot serve as a substitute for those obligations.

Unilateral actions will not bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, nor will they help to achieve the oft-reiterated objective of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side, within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to wish you every success during your term. I would like also to express our appreciation to Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain for the competent manner in which he guided our work during the month of September.

The delegation of Brazil supports the convening of this timely debate on the situation in the Middle East, as new, highly deplorable events characterized by brutality and bloodshed are taking place in Gaza, in the Palestinian occupied territories. Brazil is gravely concerned at the escalation of violence and at the mounting toll of casualties as a result of a massive new operation — code-named "Days of Penitence" — carried out in the past five days by Israeli military forces. We condemn the disproportionate use of force employed by the Israeli military in densely populated areas that has caused widespread suffering and loss among scores of Palestinian civilians, including

children. We also condemn the continuance by Israel of its illegal policy of extrajudicial killings. Brazil fully supports Secretary-General Kofi Annan's call for the Government of Israel to halt its deadly military incursions into the Gaza Strip and expects the Israeli Government to fully comply with international humanitarian Law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

We reject the activities of Palestinian militia aimed against the Israeli civilian population. Yet, we believe that the situation prevailing on the ground further highlights the importance of achieving progress in the peace process with a view to ending the occupation.

No unilateral solutions — especially those disregarding the need for negotiation and compromise between the parties — are likely to ensure the fair and lasting peace to which all the peoples of the region are entitled. In that connection, Brazil urges both parties to cease all acts of violence, to act in compliance with their obligations under the road map, which was endorsed by the Council by its resolution 1515 (2003), and to renew their quest for a peaceful settlement. We call upon the Quartet co-mediators to engage decisively with the parties in order to make them halt the present violence and to bring them back to the negotiating table.

The delegation of Brazil supports the draft resolution presented by Algeria for the Arab Group.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): Mr. President, my delegation also welcomes you in the Chair and wishes you all possible success during your tenure. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Spain for the very able and efficient manner in which he conducted the business of the Council over the past month.

Germany is very concerned about the recent escalation of violence in the northern Gaza Strip. We deeply regret the loss of human lives and call upon both sides to avoid actions that might further aggravate the situation.

Germany condemns the Qassam rocket attacks on Sderot, which show a blatant disregard for human life. We call upon the Palestinian Authority to do all it can in order to stop those attacks. In a special meeting last Sunday, the Palestinian Legislative Council expressed

its criticism of the Qassam rocket attacks against Israel. We feel that that was an important sign and we expect that it also signals that the Palestinian Authority will take the necessary action towards de-escalation.

No doubt, the State of Israel has the right to self-defence, in particular to protect its citizens against militant attacks. At the same time, we believe that that right should be exerted in accordance with the rule of law and within the framework of international law. We believe that it is clearly in Israel's interest to respect the principle of proportional reaction and to take into consideration the medium-term consequences of its actions. Violence against the civilian population, against people's homes, farmland and infrastructure, will enhance misery, frustration and hatred among the Palestinian population.

Both parties are called upon to refrain from actions that might strengthen extremist forces and impede the implementation of the road map. If the cycle of attacks and counter-attacks continues it will endanger a coordinated implementation of the withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank.

At this critical juncture, we appeal to all sides — the Israeli Government, the Palestinian Authority and the international community — to work together in a constructive way towards a withdrawal that creates the conditions for stability, economic recovery and security.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to join others, Mr. President, in wishing you well during your presidency and I would also like to extend my thanks to the Permanent Representative of Spain.

The Israeli-Palestinian situation is still moving in the wrong direction. On all sides of the conflict there is still deep-seated, mutual distrust and a spirit of confrontation. As a result, there is violence on both sides, Israeli and Palestinian civilians are dying — and we extend our condolences to their families — and homes and the civilian infrastructure are being destroyed.

Like many who spoke before us, we, too, confirm Israel's right to self-defence — to protect itself fully against terrorist raids. However, actions by the Israeli army in the northern part of Gaza clearly go well beyond the level required to crush the activities of the

extremists. We would urge Israel to demonstrate restraint and to understand that problems, even security problems, cannot be solved by force.

We cannot fail to note that what led to the current clashes was the rocket attack by the Palestinians against the Israeli town of Sderot, in which children's lives were lost. We would like to emphasize that unless the Palestinian leadership effectively struggles to control the terrorist groups, then a recurrence of what is happening in Gaza today is unavoidable — regardless of any draft resolution on the subject that may be before the Council for adoption.

Genuine reform of the Palestinian security services is long overdue and it cannot be put off further. Responsibility for dragging out decisive action on that matter lies squarely with the Palestinian National Administration.

The crisis in Gaza threatens implementation of the provisions of the road map. We would like to recall that there is no alternative to the road map. There is no alternative to the logic of reciprocal steps and the strategic goal of the road map — the establishment of two States, coexisting side by side. The clashes in Gaza severely complicates the implementation of the road map.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that settling all aspects of the situation in the Middle East is something that can be done only through a comprehensive approach.

Mr. Lacanilao (Philippines): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month. We would also like to thank Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo for his able leadership of the Council last month.

The Philippine delegation deplores the escalating violence in the Middle East. The recent escalation has been the bloodiest in the Gaza Strip over the past four years. We are deeply concerned with the growing casualties, particularly of innocent civilians, and deplore in the strongest terms the ongoing bloodbath that claims young lives on both sides. We express our profound sympathies to the victims and their families.

We urge Israel to halt its military raids in Gaza. Just today, three more civilians were killed by the Israeli military, including a 15-year-old girl inside her own house. We call on Israel to stop its military assault

and withdraw its approximately 200 tanks and armoured vehicles that are currently blanketing northern Gaza.

At the same time, we also call on the Palestinian Authority to stop the rocket attacks by militant groups against Israel. Also today, Palestinian militants fired another round of Qassam rockets into an Israeli border town, wounding a man.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that violence in the Middle East is continuing to be perpetrated by one side against the other, despite the clear expression of repugnance at such a state of affairs by the international community and the Security Council. The Middle East will not know peace unless the pattern of attack and reprisal is broken on both sides. We are gravely concerned that, unless strong will is exercised on all sides to curtail terrorism and violence, the peace process will not succeed.

This conflict cannot continue unabated without seriously imperilling the opportunity of future generations of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and harmony. Both sides should understand that there will be no winners in the conflict. We call on both sides to exercise restraint and refrain from acts of violence that further escalate the situation. We appeal to them to follow the path of peaceful negotiation to achieve the goal of two States living side by side in peace and security, in accordance with Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

The conflict in the Middle East will never be resolved through violent means. Thus, we urge the parties to restart the peace process, established under the road map, which the Council endorsed in resolution 1515 (2003). We ask the parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Adechí (Benin) (*spoke in French*): We would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. We would also like to thank Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo for his efforts as President of the Council last month.

We are extremely disturbed by the turn of events in Palestine over the past few days. The situation there is, indeed, worsening; self-defence cannot justify the massacre of innocent civilians. The loss of life, particularly among civilians in the occupied territories,

is unacceptable. That is why we condemn in the strongest terms the disproportionate use of force in the occupied territories. Every human life is valuable, and there can be no exception to the obligation to protect and preserve human life.

The international community's renewed commitment to ensure respect for the rule of law cannot stop at the gates to Palestine. Palestine, too, is part of the global village that we are trying to make more tolerable for all of its inhabitants, present and future. Accordingly, we call for an immediate halt to the military operation currently under way in the Gaza Strip. Israel's position will be better heard if it fully respects its moral and legal commitments as a State member of the international community. It is a State that claims to be democratic. We urge Israel to cooperate in good faith with a view to developing, together with the Palestinians, a common area of peace and prosperity.

We urge Israel to abide by its obligations with regard to the people in the occupied territories. We recognize Israel's right to protect its territory and its people against terrorist attacks. The continuing deterioration in the situation in the Middle East shows how necessary it is to return to the road map. That remains the only practicable way of arriving at a lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We therefore urge both parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map and to enter into a dialogue in good faith with a view to establishing the necessary conditions for creating a Palestinian State, in accordance with the vision of two sovereign States living side by side within internationally recognized borders. Neither the rocket attacks on Israeli villages nor the incursions of the Israeli Defense Forces into the occupied Palestinian territories accord with the terms of the road map.

Finally, we again make an urgent appeal to the Quartet to step up its efforts to bring the parties back to the negotiating table.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): I would like at the outset to express my satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council. We would also like to convey our congratulations to the Ambassador of Spain and the Spanish delegation for their excellent work during the month of September.

We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting of the Security Council,

at the request of the League of Arab States, with a view to addressing the very grave situation prevailing in the occupied Palestinian territories. We are extremely concerned about the current situation in the northern Gaza Strip — the extensive human casualties, the deaths of civilians, including children, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in general.

We join the Secretary-General in calling on the Government of Israel to halt its military incursions into the Gaza Strip and in urging the Palestinian Authority to take action to halt the firing of rockets against Israeli targets by Palestinian militants.

For its part, my delegation urges the Palestinian Authority to put an end to all acts of terror against Israeli civilians, which lead to the deadly proactive Israeli military operations.

Of particular concern is the excessive use of force by the Israeli armed forces against the Palestinians. We remind Israel that it has obligations and responsibilities under international law relative to the protection of civilians in time of war. We condemn all acts of violence and terror, the excessive and indiscriminate use of force and the physical destruction of the means of livelihood of the Palestinians. The restrictions imposed on the United Nations humanitarian workers, the disruption of the work of the United Nations agencies assisting Palestinian refugees and the impediments to its workers' conduct of humanitarian operations are also matters of great concern. We call on Israel to ease the plight of the Palestinian population and allow the humanitarian workers to resume their work in full, in conditions of security.

It is the view of my delegation that the current situation in Gaza is inconsistent with the proclaimed intentions of the Israeli Government to withdraw from Gaza. It is also inconsistent with the proclaimed intention of the Palestinians to cooperate with Israel for such a withdrawal. And it is inconsistent with the encouragement and offers of cooperation on the part of the international community to make the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza a first and decisive step to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and start the effective implementation of the Middle East peace plan, embodied in the road map.

In this context, we recall the obligations of the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, under the road map, endorsed by Security Council 1515 (2002).

In conclusion, my delegation would like to express its support for the draft resolution introduced by the Ambassador of Algeria. We consider it a balanced text and we hope that it will meet with the unanimous approval of Council members, in the expectation that its adoption will contribute to ending the bloodshed in Gaza and to moving forward with the implementation by both parties of their obligations under the road map.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): As this is the first debate in the Council this month, may I take this opportunity to extend to you, Sir, our warm felicitations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council during the current month, which promises to be a busy and important one. We also wish to extend every cooperation to you, Sir, to ensure the success of your presidency. I also express my delegation's admiration to Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo, the Permanent Representative of Spain, for his eminently successful presidency last month.

Pakistan believes that an end to the cycle of violence between Israel and the Palestinian people living under occupation could facilitate the implementation of the road map and the realization of the vision of a two-State solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003).

Unfortunately, instead of proceeding on the road map to peace, the Israeli Government has, once again, reacted by launching a cruel and ill-considered offensive, killing more than 80 Palestinians since last Wednesday. Innocent people, including women and children, have borne the brunt of the military might that Israel has brought to bear in the densely populated areas of Jabaliya and Beit Hanoun, to secure what has been described as its right to self-defence.

No one can justify the killing of innocent civilians. That is why we condemn terrorism. The rationale of the right to self-defence can not be invoked for attacks that cause mainly civilian casualties. It was after the horrible experiences of the last world war that the Geneva Conventions were adopted, outlawing the targeting of mainly civilian targets. As an occupying Power, Israel is bound by the Geneva Conventions, especially by the Fourth Geneva Convention. Need we remind ourselves that grave violations of the Geneva Conventions can be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity?

The real cause of insecurity, for Israel as much as for the Palestinians, is Israel's illegal, protracted and forcible occupation of Palestinian territories. The uninterrupted policy of illegal settlements has added injury to the continued occupation. The construction of a separation wall in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice is a manifestation of an objective, that of the permanent annexation of occupied Palestinian territories.

The Security Council has a political, moral and legal obligation to demand that Israel: first, immediately withdraw the forces it sent into the Gaza during the last few days, and halt its deliberate policy of unleashing death and destruction against the Palestinians; secondly, respect its obligations under international law, especially international humanitarian law; thirdly, allow the United Nations and other relief organizations full and unhindered humanitarian access to areas affected by its incursions; and fourthly, fulfil its road map obligations — particularly those related to its withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories and its construction of illegal settlements.

Israel must carefully consider the short and long-term implications of its actions and policies. As the President of Pakistan observed in the General Assembly, "The tragedy of Palestine is an open wound inflicted on the psyche of every Muslim" (A/59/PV.5).

A clash of civilizations may be the objective of some extremists, but it is certainly not in the interest of those who seek the part of peace and security in the Holy Land and beyond.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, Sir, I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. My delegation will fully support you in your work. At the same time, I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Spain for his outstanding leadership of the Council last month. September is the busiest month at the United Nations, but under his able guidance, the Council duly completed its work.

A few days ago, the Israeli military launched a large-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip, which has caused heavy casualties among Palestinian civilians, including women and children. This constitutes a further escalation of the bloodletting and conflict between Israel and Palestine — a matter of serious concern to China. It has seriously exacerbated

the already grave situation in the Middle East. We strongly urge Israel to immediately halt its military operations against Palestine and to keep the situation from further deteriorating and veering out of control.

We also call for a halt to attacks against Israeli civilians. China has stressed repeatedly that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through negotiations, not through the use of violence and force. We urge the parties concerned to resume contact and dialogue as soon as possible, and to return to the correct path of political negotiations.

As the principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council cannot remain indifferent and act as a mere spectator to the present situation. The Council should immediately take measures to fulfil its responsibility of protecting civilians.

China supports the draft resolution submitted by the Arab Group and hopes it can be adopted as soon as possible.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): First I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of October and to say how much we appreciated the leadership of Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo last month. Our thanks go to him.

The French authorities are extremely concerned by the ongoing deterioration in the situation in the northern part of the Gaza Strip over the past week. The large-scale Israeli military operation initiated in the evening of 28 September in Jabaliya, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya has produced great casualties and is unjustifiable. We have heard with dismay that at least one third of the victims have been under the age of 18.

The French authorities condemn the disproportionate use of force by Israel and the massive deployment of troops and armoured vehicles in densely populated urban areas. We also deplore Israel's practice of targeted assassination of Palestinian activists. That practice is contrary to international conventions and democratic values and can only fuel the spiral of violence.

As an occupying Power, Israel must act strictly within the framework of international law and must comply, in particular, with the Fourth Geneva Convention. It must make sure that there is ongoing, unfettered access by humanitarian organizations, in

particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to the civilian populations that are affected. At a time when reports note that several UNRWA schools in Jabaliya have been occupied by Israeli forces, we reaffirm the need for Israel to respect and protect UNRWA facilities, in particular its schools and clinics.

The French authorities also condemn the continued launching of home-made rockets by armed Palestinian groups against Israeli territory. Such acts are entirely unacceptable. The Palestinian Authority must put an end to those launchings and prosecute the perpetrators. It must strongly reaffirm that violence is counterproductive and that no cause can justify blind terrorist attacks against civilians.

The violence that has been unleashed in the last six days has imperilled the hope of peace brought by the prospects of a withdrawal from Gaza. Withdrawing from Gaza only after destroying it can only provoke more hatred, violence and despair. France calls upon Israel to put an end its deadly actions and calls upon the Palestinians to give up violence, which leads nowhere.

Following the Quartet's appeal to the two parties on 22 September, France appeals to reason. Only a mutual ceasefire and the prompt resumption of negotiations can break the sterile and tragic cycle of violence and promote the solution of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

I shall conclude by saying that we have taken note of the draft resolution submitted by Ambassador Baali. We hope that discussions can begin on that basis in order to reach, if not consensus, at least the broadest possible agreement.

Mr. Danforth (United States of America): With great respect for my friend the representative of Algeria, the draft resolution that has been submitted to the Council is not the road map to peace. It is yet one more step on the road to nowhere.

Many speakers today have spoken about the cycle of violence, and that is exactly what it is. One side acts, the other side reacts, then more reaction, more violence, and round and round it goes. Unfortunately, the United Nations, both the General Assembly and the Security Council, instead of saying "Stop it" to both sides, acts as the adversary of Israel and the

cheerleader of the Palestinians. That is not the way to peace. That is not the road map to peace.

Let us discuss briefly the facts before us. The problem of Qassam rockets is not a new one. It goes back a long time. This past summer, attacks began to inflict casualties on Israeli citizens. Last June, those rockets killed two Israelis, one of whom was three years old. Last Wednesday, 29 September, Qassam rockets killed two Israeli children, one aged two and one aged four. Following that act, Hamas claimed credit for what it called victory over the enemy, the enemy being a two-year-old child and a four-year-old child.

After two years of attacks, after the death of children, it is not unreasonable that Israel felt the need to respond. It did, and the cycle of violence continues. So that today, two more rockets have been fired into Israeli territory.

Qassam rockets are easy to produce. They are easy to deploy. They are easy to launch, and they have become a weapon of choice for terrorists. So now, the issue is, all right, where do we go from here? It is the position of the United States delegation that the Council should not simply adopt resolution after resolution — which are all one-sided — but that the Council should insist that, again, the road map is the way to peace.

Obviously, if Palestinians terrorists shoot at Israelis, Israelis are going to shoot back. What the Security Council should say — if it says anything — should be said to both sides. And the message should be "Stop the shooting and return to the road map".

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom. In doing so, I would like to align the United Kingdom with the statement that the representative of the Netherlands will make later on behalf of the European Union.

The United Kingdom, like other colleagues, is greatly concerned by the recent outbreaks of violence in the Gaza Strip and the large number of deaths. The United Kingdom recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against terrorism, but that response must be proportionate and within international law.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw made a statement earlier today in which he called on both sides to work to put a stop to bloodshed and violence. Israel

must act with restraint, and the Palestinian Authority must fulfil its road map commitments on security. Both sides must take much greater care to protect civilians because, at present, neither is fulfilling its responsibilities under international humanitarian law in that regard.

Continued violence, particularly in the Gaza Strip, throws into jeopardy not only the stability of the region but also the opportunity for progress presented by Israeli proposals to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. Clearly, it is in everyone's interests to ensure that Gaza is secure, stable and economically viable, both immediately after withdrawal and in the longer term.

The recent Quartet meeting confirmed that the road map remains the best opportunity for progress towards peace. The United Kingdom joins others in calling on both sides to take the necessary steps towards fulfilling their obligations under the road map and thus moving the peace process forward.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

As a measure to optimize the use of the Council's time and in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the table and invite them then to resume their seats on the side. When a speaker is taking the floor, a conference officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table so that we can run through consecutively and quickly. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Members of the Council agreed that we should aim for five minutes per intervention. In fact, members of the Council showed admirable restraint: an average of four minutes per intervention. I encourage the same brevity, if I may, for the remaining contributions.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express to you, Mr. President, and other members of the Council our sincere thanks for promptly responding to the request to convene this urgent meeting by the Group of Arab States, on whose behalf I have the honour to make this statement.

I also express to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We would be remiss if we failed to express

our appreciation to the Ambassador of Spain for his valuable efforts last month during the Spanish presidency of the Council.

This urgent meeting of the Council has been convened to discuss the grave deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the ferocious attack by the Israeli occupation authorities, which began six days ago in the Gaza Strip. The campaign has so far killed or injured scores of Palestinians, many of them children, in addition to causing the widespread destruction of houses, schools, businesses and other infrastructure, particularly in northern Gaza, the Jabaliya refugee camp and Beit Hanoun. The Israeli occupation authorities have used every type of lethal weapon in an excessive and arbitrary manner, and have obstructed relief operations and assistance by humanitarian organizations. That presages a humanitarian disaster. We strongly condemn these practices, which constitute a flagrant violation of international law and humanitarian norms.

We therefore call upon the international community, the Quartet and all other stakeholders to intervene immediately and decisively to urge Israel to put an end to these actions, which pose a grave threat to peace and security in the Middle East. Violence begets only violence. The region will be caught in a vicious circle from which it will have difficulty extricating itself. Faced with the gravity of the situation, the Arab Group in New York appeals to the Council to move immediately to put an end to this Israeli aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people. We appeal to the Council to adopt the draft resolution presented by the Arab Group, which calls upon the Israeli Government to put an end to its military operations and to withdraw from northern Gaza. The draft resolution also calls upon Israel to respect international humanitarian law, not to obstruct humanitarian assistance to civilians and to respect the inviolability of United Nations facilities, particularly those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The huge losses in terms of Palestinian property and public facilities require a firm stand by the international community to provide urgent assistance to the Palestinian people who, given the dangerous conditions in which they live, deserve international protection in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and other international norms.

This escalation comes at a time when Israel continues to expand its colonial settlements and to build the separation wall in the West Bank despite the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion, welcomed by the General Assembly. That opinion defined a series of commitments for Israel and other Member States, as well as for the United Nations. In this context, we would like to recall that the International Court of Justice requested the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to adopt additional measures to put an end to the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall.

In conclusion, we would like to recall the decisions of the recent Arab summit, held in Tunisia, which confirmed Arab States' commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace as a strategic option. We therefore call for the resumption of the negotiations on the basis of international legitimacy and the road map, so that peace, security and stability can prevail, in the interest of the peoples of the region.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Mr. President, at the outset, to thank you for your prompt response in convening this meeting to discuss the question of Palestine and the issue of Israeli acts of military aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, specifically in the Jabaliya refugee camp. I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the current month. I am fully confident that you will conduct the work of the Council with your customary efficiency. I would also like to express to Ambassador Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo, the Permanent Representative of Spain, our thanks for his stewardship of the Council last month.

The Government of Jordan stresses the need for the Israeli Government fully and immediately to halt its acts of violence and destruction in the Gaza Strip and throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, to put an end to its policy of deliberate destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and to cease forthwith its acts of extrajudicial killing, the imposition of collective punishment and its other practices against the Palestinian people. We reiterate our call to Israel to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israeli military policies will only lead to a

further deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and will escalate tensions in the region.

The international community must thus take the necessary measures to prevent Israel from persisting in the deplorable, destructive policy it has begun in Gaza, and must stress its rejection of all such Israeli practices, which are a violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

The Palestinian people have the right to self-determination and to exercise their sovereignty over their territory. The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip must therefore be complete and carried out on the basis of the road map. It must be a step towards ending Israeli occupation of all the occupied Palestinian territory. However, carrying out plans that aim at converting the Gaza Strip into a besieged province isolated from the rest of the Palestinian territory would not mean an end to occupation. Rather, it would contravene the norms of international law and signed agreements, and would, indeed, be fatal to the two-State solution.

Once again, we condemn the killing of civilians, whether on the Palestinian or the Israeli side. We maintain that the essential problem in our region is that of occupation. The time has indeed come to address that problem in a serious and sustained fashion. We adhere to the principle of ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the two-State solution, the road map, the terms of reference and the principles of the peace process. We therefore welcome the Quartet's adherence to the two-State solution and to the need to achieve progress within the peace process, as expressed in the statement recently issued by the Quartet in New York.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is gravely concerned by the ongoing cycle of retaliatory violence in Israel and the occupied territories. The European Union condemns the rocket attack on Sderot of last Wednesday, which resulted in the death of two Israeli children. The European Union fully and unconditionally rejects all forms of terrorism and calls upon the Palestinian Authority to take firm action against the planners and perpetrators of these kinds of atrocities.

The European Union deplores the disproportionate nature of the Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip. Those actions have claimed the lives of innocent civilians, including children, and left many injured. Though Israel has the right to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks, the exercise of that right should take place within the boundaries of international law. The European Union calls upon Israel to fully respect the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The European Union calls upon both bodies to exercise maximum restraint with a view to ending the spiral of violence. The European Union emphasizes that the only way to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East is through the resumption of security cooperation and direct negotiations between the parties, as called for in the road map. The European Union also supports the Secretary-General's statement of 3 October. In this context, the European Union reminds Israel of its obligation to ensure full and secure access for humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Zarif (the Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, let me join the previous speakers in congratulating you for assuming the presidency of the Council and in expressing our appreciation to your predecessor for the excellent work he carried out. Let me also express our appreciation to you for having convened this important meeting of the Council — a meeting that has once again been convened to debate yet another in a series of repeated and grave violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Recent military operations against civilian targets in the northern Gaza Strip and the brutal killing of a large number of innocent Palestinian civilians,

including women and children, in refugee camps are war crimes committed by Israel in defiance of basic norms of international law and international humanitarian law. Indeed, Israel's illegal acts of aggression and oppression against the Palestinian people seem to be deliberate attempts to preclude and torpedo any possibility of resuscitating peace in a region which has been engulfed in a whirlpool of tension and conflict for so many decades.

Israel's systematic and total disregard for the demands of the international community and its continued acts of violence and terror against the Palestinian people have caused the deterioration of the already dire and grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The recent Israeli war crimes in the Gaza Strip will undoubtedly create more instability and serve to inflame tension, threatening to further destabilize the situation in the region.

The impunity with which Israel has been allowed to carry out its established policy of targeting civilians has undoubtedly emboldened it to continue in defiance of international law, United Nations resolutions and even basic norms of decency. Collective punishments, house demolitions, land confiscation, indiscriminate extrajudicial killings and targeted assassination of Palestinian resistance leaders are but a few examples of the daily acts of State terrorism committed against the Palestinian people. It is indeed high time for the international community to take effective measures to protect and enforce the most basic rights of the Palestinian people and help put an end to the vicious cycle of violence brought about by the persistent and continued illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel.

We believe that an end to Israeli occupation, the formation of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital and the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland represent the only solution to the enduring Palestinian crisis. While strongly condemning the latest Israeli campaign in the Gaza Strip, we believe that it is imperative for the international community to weigh in heavily and to unambiguously prevent Israel from further carrying out its nefarious designs against Palestinians.

This Council especially shoulders the heaviest responsibility and should act with a view toward preventing Israel from continuing to flout the will of the international community incorporated in numerous

United Nations resolutions. We hope that this time all members of the Council recognize the need for taking decisive action in the face of this new escalation in the region and do not choose to allow further paralysis of the Council and erosion of its authority as a result of failing to address the grave situation created in the wake of the recent Israeli campaign.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): Mr. President, congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I also congratulate the Permanent Representative of Spain for his outstanding work as President last month.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the delegation of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of Arab States. My delegation considers that the question that is now before the Council bears great importance for the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East region and the world at large.

Malaysia is gravely concerned over the escalation of violence in Gaza over the past few days. The acts of violence and terror against civilians, including women, children and non-combatants, are unacceptable and deserve to be condemned by the Council. Similarly, Malaysia believes that the Council should condemn the excessive and indiscriminate use of force and physical destruction arising from broad military incursion and attacks by the Israeli occupying forces in the area of northern Gaza Strip, including in and around the Jabaliya refugee camp. We are saddened over the extensive human casualties and destruction, which has exacerbated the dire humanitarian situation in the area. These must be stopped immediately. The Security Council must exercise its role and responsibility in this regard.

Malaysia urges members of the Quartet to play a more vigorous role and undertake all necessary measures to reverse such a situation. The road map must be resuscitated, and both parties should immediately implement their obligations under the road map. The international community must prevail upon Israel to desist from continuing with its policy of collective punishment and acts of aggression against the Palestinians. In addition, the international community must render all necessary assistance to the Palestinian Authority to strengthen its security

apparatus. Malaysia commends ongoing assistance by several countries towards this end.

Malaysia, as Chairman of both the Non-Aligned Movement and the tenth Islamic Summit Conference, will continue to do its part by working with all relevant parties, including the Quartet and the Security Council, to bring about a just and durable peace in the Middle East. Malaysia remains convinced that an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, would be the best hope for lasting peace in the region, with both Israel and Palestine living peacefully, side by side, within secure and recognized borders.

Malaysia reiterates its long-standing position that the Security Council must seriously consider approving the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force or the placement of an international monitoring mechanism in the occupied Palestinian territory to oversee the implementation of the road map. That would help create an environment of confidence for the speedy resuscitation of the road map. Israel must realize that a military solution is not the answer to the conflict. Both sides must return to the negotiating table and seek a political solution.

The continued plight and suffering of the Palestinian people remain a tragic embodiment of the consequences of the non-implementation of resolutions and the non-enforcement of the decisions of the Security Council. There are ways in which the Council can ensure compliance with its resolutions and decisions by Israel. Malaysia calls upon the Council to do so now to ensure that justice and the rule of law will prevail in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): The Security Council today meets as usual in a new emergency meeting in order that all members of the international community may condemn the Israeli military incursion into Gaza and demand the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the areas of the Palestinian Jabaliya refugee camp that it invaded more than six days ago, claiming more than eighty dead and inflicting injuries on hundreds of women and children and other defenceless Palestinian civilians.

We wish on this occasion to reaffirm our firm position rejecting the targeting of civilians by any side.

Intimidating the innocent can only abet those who seek to fan the conflict and hinders Egypt's ongoing efforts to restore stability to the region and to reach a permanent and just settlement guaranteeing the dignity and security of Palestinians and Israelis alike. Current developments threaten to dash any hope for achieving that objective. Many victims have fallen, and much destruction is being suffered daily by Palestinian civilians in heavily populated camps throughout Gaza that are home to numerous women and children.

Egypt has made strenuous efforts to break the stalemate in the current peace process and to build bridges of trust. It has also tried to bring the views of Palestinians and Israelis into closer accord and to provide guarantees for a full and successful Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. We are sad and angry today, however, as yet another opportunity for peace has been lost and the seeds of hatred and grief are being sown.

Egypt calls for an immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Jabaliya camp and all areas that have been overrun since 28 September. It demands that Israel, the occupying authority, abide by all the rules of international law and the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, in addition to relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. We were grieved to learn of Israel's intention to continue the incursion for weeks to come, giving rise to the question: How many innocent civilians must fall victim to such practices before the international community raises its voice? How many families must be displaced or lose their breadwinners before the Security Council assumes its responsibility and forces the occupying power to respect the law and protect the lives of civilians?

The latest operation in Gaza is known as "Days of Penitence". We would have liked one of those days to be a day of hope — the hope that Palestinians and Israelis will return to the negotiating table; the hope that the suffering of the Palestinian people will be alleviated; the hope that the siege imposed on the Palestinian people and its leadership will be lifted; and the hope for a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, in accordance with the approach endorsed by the international community in its road map.

Egypt once again demands an immediate end to the Israeli attacks on Gaza. It urges the Security Council to adopt a unified position opposing the incursions and promoting the return of the Israeli

forces to their original positions, as well as respect for the rule of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Finally, neither international nor regional efforts to achieve a political settlement can be made in a vacuum or independently of developments on the ground. There is no doubt that Israel's widening incursion into the Gaza Strip, in contravention of international legitimacy, and its destruction of Palestinian infrastructure will have an effect opposite to that intended and cannot lead to a successful or secure withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. It will further aggravate the human, security, political, and economic situation in the occupied territories and in Israel itself.

In that context, Egypt affirms the need to conclude a ceasefire agreement; for swift and successive measures to restore confidence between the Palestinian and Israeli sides; and to move swiftly towards a full and faithful implementation of the road map.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Japan is greatly concerned about the recent clashes between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which have caused many casualties. We are deeply worried that such clashes will trigger another cycle of violence, making it still more difficult to bring about peace between the two parties.

In order to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, Japan strongly urges the Israeli side to exercise the maximum restraint and the Palestinian side to make the utmost efforts to control the extremists and to produce tangible results in that regard. We also urge both sides to promptly resume their efforts to implement the road map.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation wishes to extend its congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

Just last week, an overwhelming number of delegations, participating in the general debate of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, identified the situation in the Middle East as requiring urgent

attention by the international community. There had been encouraging reports that Israel was planning to withdraw from Gaza and the Quartet had called for such disengagement to take place in the context of the road map.

But there was also concern because, each time there has been a hopeful sign in the Middle East, it has been met by increasing violence and destruction. That prompted many delegations once again to urge both Israel and Palestine to honour their commitments under the Quartet's road map and to remind them that there can be no military solution to the crisis. The only way to achieve progress is through dialogue and negotiations that will lead to the creation of two States, an Israeli State and a Palestinian State, both with secure and internationally recognized borders.

South Africa has always been among those States that have condemned all acts of violence, terror, excessive and indiscriminate use of force, and the physical destruction of property. The situation in Gaza over the past few days has deteriorated much further than anyone could have imagined, and the Security Council can no longer postpone taking action. Our concern is that, should the Security Council be unable to act this time around, it will make the achievement of a peaceful solution in the Middle East even more remote. The Council must call for an immediate cessation of all military operations in Gaza and the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from that area.

Furthermore, the Council must call on Israel to ensure the unfettered access and safety of United Nations personnel and all medical and humanitarian aid workers to provide emergency assistance to a civilian population that finds itself caught up in yet another conflict. That is the least that the people of Gaza would expect from this Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We have every confidence in your wisdom and wish you success in your tasks. I should also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the Ambassador of Spain for his skilful and wise guidance of the Security Council.

The grave and deteriorating situation in the occupied Gaza Strip, the result of Israel's escalating military operations and pursuit of a policy of deliberate and systematic extrajudicial killing of Palestinian citizens, is threatening international peace and security and calls for urgent action by the Security Council. Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people, which continue as we speak, can only lead to further bloodshed and instability in the region. Events have already shown that the policy of military escalation against civilians will not cow the Arab and Palestinian will into accepting a settlement based on the Israeli point of view.

Israeli violations of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention have become daily and commonplace. The murder of women and children, the demolition of homes, the expulsion of populations, the collective punishment of civilians and the construction of the separation wall, in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, all continue as if they are nobody's business. How can the Security Council, which is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, remain a silent observer in the face of the daily war crimes perpetrated by Israel's occupation forces against the Palestinian people?

We also call upon the members of the Quartet to refrain from remaining silent with regard to Israel's crimes in the Gaza Strip.

Fifty years of war and violence have not yet convinced Israel that the policy of war and military might will not settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor the fact that negotiations and the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy continue to be the only way to guarantee that all the countries of the region, including the States of Israel and Palestine, will be able to live in peace and security. The Security Council is called upon to intervene promptly to put an end to Israeli military operations and to provide the necessary international protection to the Palestinian people, in accordance with the Geneva Convention and international law.

The core of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the ongoing Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories. Attempts by Israel to divert attention from that fact by placing the conflict in the context of fighting terrorism is a failed and naïve attempt that

does not deceive anyone. Occupation breeds legitimate resistance. Israeli occupation is the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The military option and policy of creating faits accomplis being pursued by the current Israeli Government in order to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict have proven to be totally useless, and serve only to bring about further deterioration of the situation in the region, further civilian deaths and more destruction. Israel's choice of the logic of force and violence over negotiation and dialogue has failed. Such a policy only brings killing and destruction to the Palestinian people, without bringing peace and security to the Israeli people.

The Security Council is called upon today to adopt the necessary measures to prevail upon Israel to renounce its policy of occupation, settlement-building, killings and destruction. The Council must also compel Israel to return to the negotiating table, which is the only way of guaranteeing lasting and comprehensive justice and security for all the peoples of the region, in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy and the peace initiative of Arab States.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council is once again meeting on an urgent basis to discuss yet another violent act by Israel, a Member State of the United Nations, against citizens of the territory it is occupying illegally and in violation of a considerable number of resolutions of this very body.

The recent escalation in attacks and military operations by Israel, the occupying Power, against the civilian population in occupied Palestinian territory have resulted in a significant number of fatalities, including children, and in a considerable number of injured persons and a great deal of destruction of infrastructure. The Cuban delegation energetically condemns the carrying out of attacks against Palestinian civilians, as well as the general destruction being caused by Israeli occupation forces in the northern Gaza Strip. We also call for an immediate end to those attacks and for the urgent withdrawal of the occupation forces.

The State terrorism being practised by Israel, which knows no limits, must cease. This new hostile act joins the extensive and growing list of Israeli acts of aggression and violations of the most basic human

rights and of the moral and physical damage inflicted on the Palestinian people. Those acts of aggression and violations include illegal settlements, house demolitions, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial executions, acts of torture, the building of a wall of separation on Palestinian land and the asphyxiation of the Palestinian economy. The crisis in Palestinian territories continues to worsen, while the number of dead and wounded grows apace, the great majority of those being innocent civilians. In that regard, we reiterate the need for Israel to respect international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Cuba reiterates its full support for the cause of Arab peoples. We especially support the cause of the Palestinian people against Israel's occupation and aggression, and we have a deep sense of solidarity with its resistance and rebellion. At the same time, Cuba condemns suicide bomb attacks and other acts against Israeli civilians, who are innocent victims of the spiral of violence provoked by their Government's policy. We also object to the manipulation of such isolated acts in order to question the Palestinian people's legitimate exercise of self-defence and to justify activities, whether large-scale or selective, against the Palestinian population.

We hope that, faced with this clear threat to international peace and security, the Security Council will act without employing the double standard that has characterized its past action on this matter, in order to urgently and decisively adopt the draft resolution that is being put forth by Algeria on behalf of the members of the Arab Group.

If we are sincerely to move forward towards a fair solution of the Palestinian problem, the United States should avoid exercising its paralyzing and complicit vetoes when the Security Council addresses this matter. It should also immediately withdraw its military financial support to Israel, including its provision of weapons — the tanks, missiles, helicopters and airplanes currently being used against the civilian population today.

The Cuban delegation would also like to reiterate that no fair and lasting peace can be achieved in the Middle East without an end to the Israeli occupation. It will also not be achieved until the Palestinian people are able to exercise its legitimate right to establish its own independent State, with its capital in East Jerusalem; until all occupied Arab land is returned and

Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip, the Syrian Golan and the West Bank, to the 1967 lines; until there is an end to Israeli provocation in southern Lebanon; until the return of Palestinian refugees is guaranteed; and until Israel's illegal settlements are withdrawn from all occupied Palestinian territory.

The President: I now give the floor to the Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Farhâdi (Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I am confident that, under your able leadership, the work of the Council will be carried out in a constructive and efficient manner. I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo, Permanent Representative of Spain, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the work of the Council during the month of September.

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, as well as to the other members of the Council, for having given me this opportunity, in my capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this important debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question and, in particular, the Israeli aggression in the northern Gaza Strip.

Another crisis is unfolding in front of our eyes in the occupied Palestinian territories. Against the backdrop of an already dangerous and highly volatile situation on the ground, Israel has launched a massive military operation in the northern Gaza Strip, particularly in the densely populated towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun and the Jabaliya refugee camp, home to more than 100,000 refugees. More than 70 Palestinians have been killed since the latest military operation began on 28 September. More than 200 armoured vehicles, backed by attack helicopters, fighter planes and unmanned surveillance drones, have descended upon the area, spreading death and destruction and exacerbating the humanitarian situation.

Palestinian civilians are being killed on a daily basis. Just today, Palestinians, including children, have fallen victim to Israeli attacks. Some 15,000 residents have had no electricity or water for days. Since the

beginning of the intifada, more than 3,700 Palestinians have been killed, and some 35,600 have been injured. The growing number of Palestinian and Israeli children directly harmed by the ongoing violence has been especially disquieting.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is very alarmed by Israel's disproportionate use of force in the Gaza Strip, in some of the world's most densely populated areas, and it calls upon the Israeli Government to fulfil its obligation as the occupying Power and immediately to stop the military assault on the Gaza Strip and on the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. Actions that further harm the impoverished Palestinians will not bring security to Israelis and will not contribute to realizing the hope of a negotiated settlement to this painful conflict.

The Committee urges the Security Council to send a clear message to the occupying Power to make it stop wreaking havoc in the Gaza Strip and destroying the lives of thousands of Palestinians.

We also call on the Palestinian Authority to do all it can to stop Palestinian militants from firing rockets against Israeli targets. We agree with the Palestinian leadership that those actions do not contribute to the Palestinian cause and only serve to prolong the deadly conflict.

We call on the international community to step up its assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), whose dwindling resources severely limit its capacity to support the growing number of homeless and destitute Palestinians. We call on the Government of Israel to allow UNRWA workers unhindered access to the Palestinian families who desperately need medical and humanitarian aid.

We also strongly urge the Quartet to do all it can to get the leadership of both sides back to the negotiating table and to begin the long-delayed implementation of the road map, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and the principle of a permanent two-State solution to the conflict, based on the 1967 borders, the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the right of all States in the region to live in peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I would also like to express our appreciation for the way in which Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo conducted the Council's deliberations last month. I would like to thank you and, through you, the other members of the Council for promptly responding to the request to convene this meeting to address the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group.

If it is true that this meeting was long overdue, it is also true that an opportunity remains for the Council to shoulder its responsibilities by adopting measures that would end the crimes mercilessly perpetrated by Israel against a defenceless, unprotected people. These acts are being committed without any respect for international law or for the 40 Security Council and more than 600 General Assembly resolutions on this subject.

Days and weeks have passed, and Israel continues its barbaric military actions against the Palestinian people. Israel has not hesitated to use against civilian targets the latest weapons in its arsenal, including missiles, tanks, fighter jets, bulldozers and various types and classes of internationally banned weapons. This has left behind a trail of death and destruction in all parts of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Such attacks have become commonplace. The situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, while Israel pursues its illegal destructive policies and practices against the Palestinian people. The toll among Palestinian citizens killed by Israel in recent days stands at 83, many of whom were children or elderly people; eight more have been killed today. The Israeli military machine continues cutting a swath of death and terror that has led to the wounding of more than 350 people and to the destruction of many homes, schools, health centres and United Nations facilities. This is a war crime that deserves the international community's deterrence and condemnation to prevent a spillover in the Middle East and the rest of the world.

According to figures provided by the Secretariat, the number of Palestinians killed by the occupation forces in the past four years stands at about 3,500. Israel's killing and destruction in the occupied Palestinian territories constitute collective punishment against the Palestinian people living under brutal occupation.

Many questions beg for answers. How long will the Security Council remain incapable of condemning Israeli terrorism and of adopting a position in favour of justice and equality among peoples, free from double standards? How can we explain the negative position taken by the Security Council in the face of flagrant Israeli defiance and arrogance and its flouting of all norms and practices of international law? How long will Israel be allowed to remain above the law as a result of the negative position of the Security Council towards its daily killing of Palestinians?

We have repeatedly warned against the plans of the head of the Israeli Government and his attempts to mislead the international community. At a time when he claims to be adopting measures to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, we find him amassing his forces in various parts of the Strip. He is increasing the number of settlements in the West Bank and continuing to build the racist separation wall, in defiance of the opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Furthermore, Israel, the occupying force, reiterates that the attacks it carries out are part and parcel of an overall military operation, and, according to a statement made by its Prime Minister this afternoon, it plans to continue, and even escalate, such operations in the coming weeks.

While Israel says it plans to withdraw its forces from Gaza, we see that it is asking for measures to be taken and guarantees to be provided. It wants to exact a high price for such a withdrawal, which, in effect, constitutes a violation of international law and of the resolutions of the Council. Therefore, withdrawal from Gaza becomes a pretext for Israel to kill many people in Gaza, to besiege them, deprive them of sovereignty over their territorial waters and air space, and undermine their relations with their neighbours.

Therefore the so-called giving back of Gaza becomes a reason for Israel to demolish it, with its occupants still in place. It becomes a reason to target and assassinate one leader after another to prevent any negotiations or even the establishment of a Palestinian

State. The Israeli Government will not do what it takes to realize a just and comprehensive peace; it is shirking its responsibilities; it has rejected United Nations resolutions relevant to the occupied Arab territories; and it is ignoring the Arab peace initiative. This shirking, this avoidance, this rejection, this defiance — they cannot conceal the fact that Israel is a Government of occupation and expansion whose actions are taken at the expense of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, the Security Council must urgently condemn Israel, its war crimes and its policy of State terror. It has become clearer than ever that peace in the region cannot prevail unless Israel can be made to fulfil its commitment to the realization of a just and comprehensive peace based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab peace initiative.

The President: I call on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and to wish the United Kingdom delegation every success in this important task. We express our appreciation to your Spanish predecessor for the able manner in which he guided the work of the Security Council.

My delegation has aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. Although our concerns are duly reflected in that statement, I would like to add the following remarks, given Turkey's special historical and friendly relations both with the Palestinians and Israel.

We are deeply troubled by the ongoing terrible events and the cycle of violence in the region. The recent escalation in the Gaza Strip, which has claimed the lives of dozens of innocent civilians, including children, is the most recent tragedy indicative of how grave the situation has actually become. The Palestinian population is helpless in the face of this drive for collective punishment.

Although we recognize the legitimate security needs of Israel, we are critical of its policies of demolition, the excessive use of force and targeted killings. The military operations carried out and the destruction wrought by Israel, which directly harm civilians, can have no justifiable basis. It is sad that we are once again witnessing the fact that Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force does not strengthen the security it seeks.

On the other hand, we believe that the Palestinian Authority should be steadfast in stepping up its efforts to remove the terrorist infrastructure. Radical elements should not be allowed to take control of the future of the Palestinian people and come to define the just struggle of the Palestinians. That is one more reason why the Palestinian Authority should receive our support. Security for all can be achieved only if an environment conducive to revitalizing the stalled peace process is made possible by all the relevant parties of Palestinian society.

Turkey calls on both parties to exercise the utmost restraint in order to prevent any escalation that could destabilize the whole region.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict lies at the heart of the Middle East question. It is hampering efforts to establish a stable and peaceful environment, as desired by the international community. We strongly urge both parties to pursue a path of reconciliation, through direct negotiations, aimed at achieving a just and viable peace in accordance with the two-State vision based on the road map. Turkey stands ready to facilitate any effort towards that lofty goal.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I would note that the draft resolution submitted by Algeria and Tunisia has been circulated in the Chamber. My understanding is that it has now gone into blue, and there will be a discussion in consultations tomorrow at 4 p.m. We will then decide, in that light of that, how to proceed.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.